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Online Catalogs and User Education

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USER EDUCATION

At Stephen F. Austin State University's Ralph W. Steen Library, the design of a user education program has taken on a special meaning through defining user education in its broadest context. As an academic unit of the university, the library views itself as a full partner in the educational enterprise and, as such, is contributing its considerable and in some respects unique resources to the educational enterprise in non-traditional ways.

The library's user education program at Stephen F. Austin operates in conjunction with academic assistance services offered through the university library. The services, established last year, are under the fiscal administration of the library and operate in partnership with the Counseling and Guidance Department of the Division of Student Affairs and with three academic departments: Elementary Education, English, and Mathematics and Statistics.

Services provided include personalized tutoring in skill areas basic to educational success: reading, writing, and mathematics. Programs are customized to the needs of the particular student, whose participation is largely voluntary. Programmed instruction modules, e.g., computer-assisted instruction, are an important part of the program and permit the student, proceeding at his own pace, to practice overcoming deficiencies identified through testing. A non-credit short course in study skills, goal setting, time and stress management, and career guidance is also offered.

The library's expertise in acquiring and managing the wealth of information resources needed to support student prescriptive work has been a considerable asset to the program's development. In addition, the library's location at the hub of campus activity has provided a high profile for the center, thus helping to swell the number of students seeking assistance to an impressive thirteen percent of total enrollment during the first year of operation.

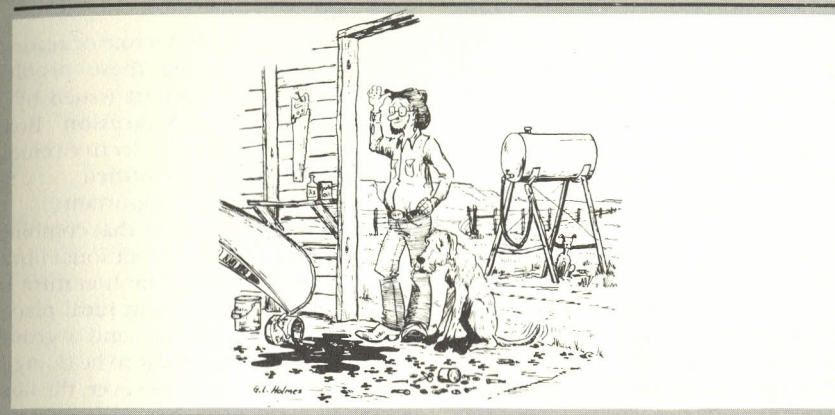
The need to provide microcomputers, audiotape recorders, and a variety of other

specialized equipment to support academic assistance services is closely related to the need to have such equipment to support the basic library mission as a purveyor of information resources. Consequently, assistance services are offered through a library facility which integrates these services with audiovisual services to the general academic community.

The equipment needed to support academic assistance services has been expanded by the acquisition of film and videotape viewing equipment. Classrooms for group viewing have been provided and limited audiovisual production facilities, music listening facilities, and reading services for the blind have been established. The facility that houses all this is officially known as the Academic Assistance and Resource Center (AARC). AARC also provides offices for assistance staff, space for tutorial instruction, staff to monitor and service the equipment and register students, and at least minimal technical assistance. Thus, what are becoming essential library services in a world in which technology has created new forms for information storage are being offered in conjunction with programs of academic assistance at a considerable savings to both.

The ability of blind and visually-handicapped students to access information resources has always been severely limited. Grant funds provided through the Department of Counseling/Special Educational Programs have permitted the acquisition of equipment for AARC which extends the ability of the visually handicapped to access printed materials. A VersaBraille machine enables braille to be conveniently encoded on audiocassette tapes and played back through the machine, eliminating the considerable bulk of hard copy braille for the note-taking student. The VersaBraille is being interfaced with an Apple Computer to provide access to computer-assisted instructional programs intended originally for the sighted. A speech synthesizer to provide spoken output of machine readable data is being acquired for the Apple. The VersaBraille

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will be interfaced with these devices to increase flexibility in managing and accessing information available. A Visualtek large print projector has also been acquired and made available through grant funds.

The facility has opened up other unique opportunities in the area of bibliographic instruction. The classroom space in AARC is utilized for library instruction. Available audiovisual equipment aids in its delivery. In addition, working in close proximity with academic assistance faculty permits the bibliographic instruction librarian more active participation in student development. A new study skills course is being developed which will contain a bibliographic instruction component.

This effort is worthy of special note. Academic assistance centers concentrate heavily on developmental work. Instruction emphasizes basic skill areas in which the student has already received considerable instruction prior to graduation from high school. But library instruction is the traditional educational stepchild. Despite our best efforts to increase the number of school librarians, most Texas students are fortunate to receive the most basic library instruction—and this intended primarily to facilitate the students' use of the comparatively accessible school library. Therefore, teaching library research skills to developmental students should place them at a comparative advantage to other students. It will be interesting to see whether the effort to provide library instruction at a level *greater than that experienced by other students* can be determined to have an impact on student performance. Although problematic, an attempt will be made to evaluate the results of this effort.

Academic assistance programs are of growing importance in higher education. A recent study by the College Board and Educational Testing Service found that the mean percent of students requiring remediation in public colleges and universities nationally was a troubling thirty percent, only seven percent less than the mean for community colleges which generally enforce less stringent entrance requirements.¹ Even in the usually more selective private colleges and universities,

the mean reached twenty-one percent. Moreover, the study saw no significant decrease in the need for remedial services over the next five years. The study also found that learning centers play a role in academic assistance programs in forty-seven percent of the public colleges and universities offering developmental programs.

Specific support for the role of academic libraries in addressing these problems may be found in a report issued by the Southern Regional Education Board: "Some key elements of effective remedial programs have been identified . . . Support services are very important: . . . (including) a learning center that combines a remedial laboratory, a traditional library, and the classroom."² The literature suggests that the library is an ideal place to house assistance services and a growing number of schools appear to be doing just this. At other schools, however, the library seems to serve primarily as a convenient location for a service which depends to a great extent on visibility for success.³ What makes the Stephen F. Austin picture perhaps unique is the strong role which the library plays in program development.

Perhaps in the long run, whatever is finally achieved at the Ralph W. Steen Library will be the result at least in part of the library's having asked the question, "What is user education?" with an open mind and to have been willing to seek the answer in terms of the potentialities at hand. Perhaps, it is an important question for every library to ask.—*Alvin C. Cage, Director of Libraries, Stephen F. Austin State University, Nacogdoches 75962.* ■

Sources

1. Temple, Barker & Sloane, Inc. reported the results of a survey conducted on behalf of the College Board and Educational Testing Service to survey participants in a letter dated 10 December 1984.
2. Parler, Nettie P. *Improving minority students' competencies: strategies in selected colleges*. Southern Regional Education Board, 1982. (Issues in Higher Education, no. 20), p. 5.
3. Op. cit., p. 41.

TBA Committee Master List

The Texas Bluebonnet Award Committee is pleased to announce the new master list for 1985-1986. These titles were selected by the TBA Committee after receiving suggestions from librarians, parents, teachers, and students across the state. Contained on the list are titles by two Texas authors—Sibyl Hancock of Houston, and Janice Shefelman of Austin.

- Aliki. *A Medieval Feast*. Crowell, 1983.
 Brittain, Bill. *The Wish Giver: Three Tales of Coven Tree*. Harper & Row, 1983.
 Cole, Joanna. *Bony-legs*. Four Winds Press, 1983.
 Freedman, Russell. *Children of the Wild West*. Clarion Books, 1983.
 George, Jean C. *The Talking Earth*. Harper, 1983.
 Giblin, James Cross. *Chimney Sweeps: Yesterday and Today*. Crowell, 1982.
 Greer, Gery & Bob Ruddick. *Max and Me and the Time Machine*. Harcourt, 1983.
 Hahn, Mary Downing. *Daphne's Book*. Clarion, 1983.
 Hancock, Sibyl. *Esteban and the Ghost*. Dial, 1983.
 Howe, James. *Howliday Inn*. Atheneum, 1982.
 Lord, Bette Bao. *In the Year of the Boar and Jackie Robinson*. Harper, 1984.
 Prelutsky, Jack. *The New Kid on the Block*. Greenwillow, 1984.
 Provensen, Alice and Martin. *The Glorious Flight: Across the Channel with Louis Bleriot*. Viking, 1983.
 Roberts, Willo Davis. *The Pet-Sitting Peril*. Atheneum, 1983.
 Ruckman, Ivy. *Night of the Twisters*. Crowell, 1984.
 Shefelman, Janice Jordan. *A Paradise Called Texas*. Eakin, 1983.
 Wallace, Bill. *Trapped in Death Cave*. Holiday, 1984.
 Wright, Betty Ren. *The Dollhouse Murders*. Holiday, 1983.
 Yep, Laurence. *Dragon of the Lost Sea*. Harper, 1982.
 April 1, 1985 will mark the beginning of the new registration period for TBA. For

further information, contact Dr. Janelle Paris, TBA Chair, School of Library Science, PO Box 2236, Sam Houston State University, Huntsville 77341. 409/294-1150. ■

I&R Service Directory

The Interagency Information and Referral System announced the publication of the *Information and Referral Service Directory for Harris, Fort Bend and Montgomery Counties, Texas*. This directory has been developed to meet the need for accurate, up-to-date information about those organizations in the Tri-County Area that provide information and referral services to the public. This reference source will promote efficient delivery of community services while reducing duplication of effort on the part of the service providers.

For each of the listed I&R services, the directory gives basic facts as well as a detailed service description. An alphabetical agency index and a comprehensive subject index have been included to make the directory simple and speedy to use.

Production of this directory is one of many activities of the Interagency Information and Referral System, a non-profit model community project. The system functions as a support network and communications forum for I&R services in the Greater Houston Area.

For information contact Peg Froehlich, Director, Interagency Information and Referral System, PO Box 13066, Houston 77219. 713/528-0136. ■

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